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Cape Town Pelagics Trip Report

18 October 2008

A Cape Town Pelagics trip left Simonstown at 07h30 on 18 October 2008 for the Cape Canyon trawl grounds off Cape Point, guided by Cape Town Pelagics guide, Bruce Dyer.

Several groups of **Cape Cormorant** and individual **Swift Tern** were seen en route to Cape Point in a fresh north westerly wind – quite contradictory to all weather reports. By the time we reached Cape Point the wind was a steady 50 kph. We made slow progress to a position a little beyond “The Bellows” and realized we could not go any further. **Cape Gannets** were regularly seen whizzing by at this point. We chummed a little and before long had several very close views of **White-chinned Petrel**. We cruised toward several feeding groups of **Terns (Common and Swift)** and picked up both **Pale** and dark-morph **Parasitic Jaeger** belting by in the wind. This proved to be the norm for other birds, which included an immature **Shy Albatross**, **Sooty Shearwater** and a **Subantarctic Skua**.

We moved inshore after arriving at Cape Point, to get out of the wind and to make a more comfortable trek back to Simonstown. We were treated to great views of a juvenile **Southern Giant Petrel** and several **Southern Right Whales**. Added some notable species not usually included on a pelagic, but we were getting desperate to add species to the list, viz. Ostrich and Hadedda. We viewed the **Bank Cormorant** colony and Cape Fur Seal haul-out at Partridge Point while having our lunch and getting some respite from the battering of the wind. We returned to Simonstown thereafter arriving alongside at 12h00.

Bird List

Shy Albatross	1
White-chinned Petrel	20
Sooty Shearwater	5
Southern Giant Petrel	1
Unid. Giant Petrel	1
Cape Gannet	50
Subantarctic Skua	1
Parasitic Jaeger	4
Kelp Gull	50 (18 nests counted on slopes between Cape Point & Smitswinkel Bay)
Hartlaub's Gull	9
Cape Cormorant	500
Bank Cormorant	30 (23 nests at Partridge Point)
Crowned Cormorant	2
White-breasted Cormorant	30 (14 nests at Partridge Point)
African Penguin	18

Mammals

Cape Fur Seal	100
Southern Right Whale	6 (between Cape Point and Boulders)

A message from Cape Town Pelagics: A huge thank you to our experienced skippers who are able to safely lead us to the best birding areas and skillfully manoeuvre the boat into just the best position while all on board are busy concentrating on the birds! Coordinating a pelagic trip over a year in advance with guests from all across South Africa and different countries around the world requires an organised office team. We thank them for their special eye for detail - and for the sometimes last-minute rearrangements and frustration if the weather delays the trip to another day! Our biggest thank-you is to our Cape Town Pelagics guides who take time out of their work, often involving seabirds and conservation, and time away from their families, to provide our guests with a world-class birding experience. Cape Town Pelagics donates all its profits to seabirds, and so all the participants who join the trip make a contribution towards bird research and conservation – a big thank you from all of us.

Trip Report by Cape Town Pelagics guide Bruce Dyer.